

ODEP/EconSys

Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program (EFSLMP)

FY 2015 Core State Application

Iowa

October 30, 2014

Submitted to:

Cheryl Mitchell

Cheryl.Mitchell@econsys.com

Economic Systems Inc.

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Terry E. Branstad
GOVERNOR

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

Kim Reynolds
LT. GOVERNOR

October 27, 2014

Kathleen Martinez
Assistant Secretary
Office of Disability Employment Policy
U.S. Department of Labor
Frances Perkins Building,
200 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20210

Dear Ms. Martinez:

The State of Iowa is committed to the Employment First Leadership State Mentor Program (EFLSMP) process. During the past three years, Iowa has served the role of a Protégé State. These efforts resulted in increased community-based, integrated employment opportunities for individuals with the most significant disabilities.

As a state, we have been aggressive in promoting the traits of accountability, innovation and leadership among our state agencies and programs. The 2015 EFLSMP grant application will provide additional opportunities for Iowa to enhance employment options for individuals with the most significant disabilities. It will expand focus on communication with our community rehabilitation providers and support coordination of services among our state system employment partners.

I support this application. We continue to support competitive, community-based, integrated employment options as a preferred employment choice and appreciate the opportunities that have been provided for the state to align services and resources through EFLSMP.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Terry E. Branstad".

Terry E. Branstad
Governor of Iowa

Cc: Ali Sayer, Economic Systems, Inc.

I. State Landscape Assessment

1. Data/Demographic Information

Iowa is a relatively rural state with a little over 3 million citizens. Of these, approximately 11%, or around 335,000 individuals, experience some type of disability. Of that, approximately 30,000 are under 18 years of age, while 169,000 are between 18 and 64. The median earning for Iowans age 16 and over who experienced a disability in 2011 (latest data available) was \$16,135, while the median earning for Iowans without disabilities during that same time was \$29,533. The employment rate for Iowans with a disability was 41%, while the employment rate for citizens without disabilities was 89.4% for that same time period (State Data Center of Iowa, 2013).

Specific employment data for graduates working with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services indicate that for Fiscal Year 2014 (FY14), 922 students were closed with successful employment outcomes. The average hours worked was 35 and the average hourly wage was \$11.23.

Service data from Mental Health and Disabilities Services (MHDS) show that in State Fiscal Year 2013 (SFY13), 4,771 individuals were in some type of community-based work services, while close to 9,000 were served in facility-based services. While these figures are discouraging, it does represent an increase of individuals in integrated employment from the previous year.

2. Description of State's Investments in Employment First

Iowa has a strong Employment First (E1st) initiative that is influencing the state's employment service delivery system and involves a broad range of collaborators. While there is still much work to do, advocacy efforts have begun to affect practice, policies and expectations.

Iowa's E1st Vision: Iowans with disabilities are employed at the same rate as other Iowans and receiving equal benefits.

Mission of E1st: Change beliefs, practices, systems and funding so that employment in the general workforce is the first and preferred outcome in the provision of publicly funded services for all working age Iowans with disabilities, regardless of level of disability.

Driven by the belief that all Iowans with disabilities should have the same opportunity for employment as other Iowans, 14 focus groups were held throughout the state in 2009 to answer the question, "How do we make competitive employment the first priority and the expected and preferred outcome of all Iowans with disabilities?" From the ideas and innovative actions gathered, four goals emerged which drive Iowa's efforts to date:

Goal 1: Policies and funding are aligned with E1st and strong partnerships remove barriers.

Goal 2: Individuals with disabilities and family members advocate for E1st and participate in the design of employment services and supports.

Goal 3: Businesses influence businesses to create employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Goal 4: Best practices drive transition outcomes for living, working and learning.

These four goals have driven the E1st work to date. They have been the foundation of our multiple efforts, including the work of the current EFSLMP, Iowa Coalition for Integrated Employment (ICIE), Iowa's Project of National Significance Employment Systems Change Grant awarded to Iowa's Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council), Iowa-APSE (Iowa-Association for Persons Supporting EmploymentFirst) and the state's work with the State Employment Leadership Network (SELN). Efforts have also been coordinated with the Disability Employment Initiative (DEI) as administered through the Iowa Workforce Center.

Iowa-APSE, assisted by EFSLMP, ICIE, the DD Council with additional partners of the Center for Disabilities and Development at the University of Iowa (Iowa's UCEDD) and Iowa's Money Follows the Person Program (MFP) hosted E1st Summits for the past six years (2009-2014) to disseminate and share information, provide training and generate excitement for the framework of E1st. In 2012, 2013, and 2014 Iowa's Governor has made an E1st Proclamation each October supporting the goals of Iowa's E1st movement. Iowa's MHDS has as its employment vision that "employment in the general workforce is the first priority and expected and preferred outcome in the provision of publically funded services". Iowa's Olmstead Task Force issued a strong Position Paper in 2013 calling for community employment to be incentivized through adequate reimbursement rates. They also called for assistance to employment providers to shift from facility-based to a community-based business model.

It is clear that through participation in the initial EFSLMP Grant, Iowa has become invested in these efforts. Four major accomplishments include: The Iowa Governance Group agreeing to coordinate efforts in a Memorandum Of Agreement (MOA) supporting employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities in competitive, community-based, integrated employment settings; the development of a family/parent coalition that went from 0 members to 60 individuals; 14 community providers participating in voluntary transformation efforts resulting in 427 consumers obtaining employment, with 86 of those positions being identified as customized; and Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services integrating both Discovery and Customized Employment service options in their service delivery process.

3. Specific Challenges

Even though progress is being made, Iowa still faces many challenges to fully embrace an E1st agenda. Specific challenges faced by Iowa's system currently include:

a) Providers with 14c certificates are still taking a fear-based stance, and local media is capitalizing on this. For examples see:

<http://m.lemarssentinel.com/story/2115570.html>;
<http://www.chronicletimes.com/story/2127390.html>.

Both of these articles demonstrate the “let’s keep the status quo” mindset that appears widespread in Iowa. These providers in turn talk to the parents of the individuals they serve who then in turn are fearful and begin advocating for the same services that they have always known.

b) Large Medicaid budget deficits in current and projected future fiscal years has complicated the work of rate modeling, and delayed decision-making leading to implementation. Additionally, more Medicaid funds are still being spent on segregated employment services than integrated, and with the delayed implementation of the suggested new rates, this will continue.

c) Some provider agencies are engaging in transformation activity, without the necessary support of capacity building resources from all state agency partners.

4. Participation in ODEP’s EFSLMP to Date

Iowa was one of the three protégé states identified in the 2012 EFSLMP application process. During these past two and one-half years Iowa has benefited greatly from the assistance provided by EFSLMP and made progress toward our goals of 1) transforming our policies and funding structures to align with E1st principles, 2) studying other states to find successful funding mechanisms, and 3) establishing partnerships between employment and other state systems to jointly fund seamless services for Iowans with disabilities. During this time, we have received both in-person and virtual training and technical assistance.

The first year we used 320 hours of Training and Technical SME hours. Initially, to launch our Pilot Projects implementing Customized Employment, we relied heavily on assistance from Ellen Condon. Ellen presented a full day workshop in conjunction with the Iowa-ASPE conference and then spent another day with the staff from the six providers. She also came and spent time at each of the six providers, offering valuable technical assistance individualized to that specific agency. She continues that assistance to date through telephone consultations on an as-needed basis.

We also used SME Nancy Gurney extensively to assist the providers interested in transforming their business model from segregated to integrated services. She came to Iowa multiple times, as well as provided virtual assistance. As a result of this assistance and changes in expectations, as of September 2014, 14 providers assisted 427 Iowans with disabilities to secure integrated employment. Eight-six of these positions were reported as Customized. The average wage was \$7.81 an hour, with the hours worked averaging 17 per week.

Another SME used significantly was Lisa Mills. Her assistance was invaluable in the Employment Services Redesign. She facilitated the Workgroup charged with making recommendations to the MHDS leadership regarding service definitions, reasonable and equitable rates, and staff qualifications.

Other equally important SMEs but less used included Rich Luecking, Michael Callahan, Cary Griffin, and Margaret Lee Thompson.

During the second year, we continued to access these SMEs and added Cesilee Coulson regarding staff development.

Through the two years, the ODEP Community of Practice (CoP) Call technical assistance has been surprisingly effective. It is a great method to get information out quickly, target a specific topic and reach a large number of people. Both the topics and the speakers have been helpful. Topics included Supervision, Meaningful Days, Asset Development, Blending and Braiding Funding, Discovery, Collaborative Practices in the Transition Years and Evidence Based Practice. Iowa considered this type of technical assistance so successful we started our own CoP Calls conducted during this last year. Topics included Job Development, Staff Development, “What’s Happening in Iowa”, IVRS Services and Consumer Choices Options (CCO), Iowa’s self-directed program. These have typically been attended by 40-50 participants and attendance continues to grow.

Vision Quest 2012-2013 provided Iowa with enormously valuable and timely technical assistance from Lisa Mills and Abby Cooper in the arena of rate restructuring. Many of the ideas and suggestions made in this Vision Quest were folded into the Workgroup process that Iowa stakeholders undertook in 2013.

Vision Quest 2013-2014 engaged the Iowa team with subject matter experts Sara Murphy and Stephen Hall around implementing best practices in our self-directed (Consumer Choices Option) program. These ideas and suggestions are being incorporated into program revisions and rules revisions that are forthcoming.

From the beginning, we understood the power and importance of collaboration, leveraging resources and creating strong partnerships. Therefore, we worked diligently to create a strong team working toward a shared agenda. Each employment initiative, advocacy group and stakeholder invested in increasing integrated employment is represented at the table. This has allowed us to create more benefit than any of us could do alone. Partnering with the ICIE Initiative as well as the DEI has increased the impact of our efforts.

For example, leveraging resources with ICIE allowed us to double the number of Customized Employment Pilot Projects. Likewise, staff from employment providers throughout the state were able to attend a two-day employment training funded collaboratively by DEI, ICIE, IVRS and the Iowa Department of Aging at no cost. We have also partnered with IACP and Iowa-APSE to bring in SMEs to provide training at their respective conferences, allowing for a broader audience. ICIE also assisted in making the day training by Margaret Lee Thompson more accessible for parents by helping defray their expenses.

II. Plan for Use of FY 2015 EFSLMP Core State Resources

1. Specific Thematic Area(s) and Goal(s)

Due to the excitement and impact of multiple employment providers to transform their business model, Iowa proposes to continue our work of Provider Transformation. While our current EFSLMP efforts initially had six Pilot Projects for Customized Employment, interest rapidly grew to 15 providers interested in transformation. Currently 14 providers are attending meetings, providing data and strategically advancing the E1st principles in their agencies. As providers understand that “the world is changing,” they are eager to learn how to best deliver quality services in this new environment.

It is important to note that the providers currently involved in transformation activities represent 44% of the total prevocational claims for SFY13 and are serving 46% of the Medicaid members receiving prevocational services. The exponential ramifications of increasing the number of providers transforming their business model are tremendous.

Specifically our goals are to:

- Add an additional 16 providers to our current 14 engaged in transforming their business model, for a total of 30, thus potentially doubling the employment outcomes achieved;
- Develop a communication plan to share focused information with individuals with disabilities, family members and policy makers about the benefits of community employment; and
- Increase the number of providers reporting employment outcomes, including hours, wages and employment settings.
- Continue with the Iowa Community of Practice Calls.

2. Key Technical Assistance and Training Activities:

To accomplish these goals, we plan to bring together these providers on a quarterly basis for training, networking, and brainstorming. Our plan is to use appropriate SMEs to assist us to provide quality information based on the needs of the group. For example, Nancy Gurney might be used to share with the group ways to maximum funding opportunities whereas another SME might be used to discuss the day-to-day “nuts and bolts” aspects of transformation. Other SMEs who might be used include Gail Fanjoy and Genni Sasnett. The final identification of SMEs will result from the actual employment providers involved. They know best the type of technical assistance and training they need to transform their practices. This was the basic method used for our current EFSLMP efforts and was successful. We have the added benefit for these 11 months because the original agencies can serve as mentors to the new agencies.

We will use the same protocol as our current efforts, including organizational assessments, assistance with strategic planning, professional development and training opportunities.

3. Preferences for Vision Quest Policy Working Group Series

To complement the technical assistance and training support we are requesting for Provider Transformation, we believe that Topic II, Medicaid HCBS Implementation, would be the most helpful. Our work through the first Vision Quest series “Defining the Outcomes You Want and Paying for the Outcomes You Desire” with Lisa Mills and Abby Cooper followed by the second series, “Developing Sustainable Wrap-around Supports to Make Integrated Employment and Community Engagement a Reality for Citizens with Significant Disabilities,” with Steven Hall and Sara Murphy, places us in an excellent position to take full advantage of this assistance. Additionally, the timeline required by this opportunity fits well with the policy changes that the Iowa Medicaid Enterprise and community service providers will initiate during the next 11 months.

Iowa has to submit our Waiver amendments to the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) by December 30, 2014. While these amendments will include the Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) setting requirements and the person-centered planning requirements for HCBS services, these amendments will not have our proposed rate restructuring, new services definitions or provider qualifications. Therefore, we will be required to submit additional amendments for our HCBS Intellectual Disability Waiver, the Brain Injury Waiver and a state plan amendment (SPA) for the state plan HCBS Habilitation program—the three programs that provide employment services. The assistance through the Vision Quest Policy Working Group could give us access to already developed amendments and suggestions specifically for Iowa.

Through the earlier Vision Quest Working Group we have had the Policy Assessment/Analysis as outlined in Phase One. At the same time a review by different SMEs might be advantageous. We have received the recommendations from the previous SMEs as outlined in Phase Two, and these recommendations have been incorporated in the forthcoming program and rule revision. It is anticipated that these recommendations will be approved in the near future. This will allow us to immediately begin developing products that will facilitate the successful implementation.

4. Projected policy-specific and technical milestones

The technical milestones represent products and process that will be developed to implement the changed policies. These could include the following:

- Updated amendments to the Intellectual Disability Waiver.
- Updated amendments to the Brain Injury Waiver.
- State Plan amendments for Habilitation.
- Amended Administrative Rules for provider qualifications, service definitions and reimbursement methodology.
- Public Input process required by CMS for significant changes to the Waivers and state plan HCBS
- Clearer communication documents for Consumer Directed Options.
- Development of a process to collect employment outcome data from participating providers delivering Medicaid funded HCBS employment supports.
- An updated HCBS Provider Manual—which will contain the new service definitions, service reimbursement rates, details on billing and in general a “how-to” manual for providers.
- A new Employment Service Guidebook—which will outline the services available through the public agencies supporting people in employment, how to access those services and how the different public agencies supporting people in employment work together to provide a seamless service for the job seeker. This will be used to help explain services to individuals with disabilities, their families, and support personnel, as well as case managers.
- Webinars –sharing information – providing education to Case Managers, Care Coordinators, IVRS Counselors, and Department of Education Employment Support staff on the new employment service coordination expectations, person-centered planning and employment, working with community resource providers to help transitioning youth plan for their

employment future. It is most likely that these will be integrated into the Iowa CoP Calls, as well as having additional specific and targeted calls for enhanced conversation and detail.

- Provide education to Medicaid funded HCBS Employment Service providers on the new employment service definitions, reimbursement methodology and provider qualifications.
- Ongoing provider education and technical assistance to transition existing service models to full compliance with the new federal rules for HCBS.
- Informational Letters providing guidance to employment providers.
- Public Website sponsored by the Iowa Coalition for Integrated Employment (ICIE) and the Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council).

Second Priority: Given the close relationship between Topic II and Topic I, our second choice would be Topic I. The same products would be applicable.

III. State Participants

1. Core State Leadership Team

At the initial application for EFSLMP, Iowa recognized the importance of collaboration and cooperation. During that time, new leadership was in several key positions and it was unclear the extent to which true collaboration would occur. With hard work and strong leadership we have a strong Core Leadership Team. These include: David Mitchell, Lee Ann Russo, LeAnn Moskowitz, Lin Nibbelink, Ed Wallace, Becky Harker, and Sue Ann Morrow.

David Mitchell is the Administrator of Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS), the lead agency for our current EFSLMP work. He has over 30 years of experience in rehabilitation and has provided leadership to our current EFSLMP team. david.mitchell@iowa.gov

Lee Ann Russo is the Resource Manager of IVRS. As such, she deals daily with employment providers to assist them to develop and maintain positive working relationships with IVRS, as well as other providers. leeAnn.Russo@iowa.gov

LeAnn Moskowitz is the Program Manager for the State Plan HCBS Habilitation Program/Management Analyst: Department of Human Services, Iowa Medicaid Enterprise, Bureau of Long-Term Care Policy Unit. She is directly responsible for the operation of the Iowa Brain Injury Waiver, one of the two waivers that offer employment services. lmoskow@dhs.state.ia.us

Lin Nibbelink serves as Program Planner for Employment for Iowa Department of Human Services' Mental Health and Disability Services Division. Lin is actively involved in MHDS's planning, coordinating and monitoring of mental health and disability services for the State of Iowa. She has been an integral part of the Employment Services Restructuring efforts to date. LNIBBEL@dhs.state.ia.us

Ed Wallace is the Deputy Director of Iowa Workforce, the agency that operates the statewide system of employment services, education, and regulation of health, safety and employment laws. Additionally, he sits on the Vocational Rehabilitation State Advisory Council, Iowa's Governance Group and the Iowa Employer Disability Resource Network (EDRN). edward.wallace@iwd.iowa.gov

Becky Harker, Ph.D., serves as Executive Director of the Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council. This Council is the fiscal agent for Iowa's ICIE. Additionally, she serves on the Iowa Governance Group. bharker@dhs.state.ia.us

SueAnn Morrow, Ph.D., works as the Employment Services Specialist for Iowa's MFP program. As such, she sees the critical need for more integrated employment services on a daily basis. Her assistance allows for a "boots on the ground" perspective as we move forward with our restructuring work. She also serves on the Iowa-APSE Board in multiple capacities and is a past president. Sue-morrow@uiowa.edu

Deb Samson is the Parent Coordinator for the Iowa Department of Education's (DE) Parent Educator Connection. In this role she serves as a liaison between the DE and the regional Parent Educator Connection Coordinators. She serves on the Vocational Rehabilitation State Advisory Council and is also a parent of an adult son whose life has been significantly impacted by his disability. Deb.Samson@iowa.gov

2. Services Core State Point of Contact/Leader

Clearly the best person to fulfill this role is David Mitchell, the Administrator of Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services. He has served in this capacity during the past two and one-half years and has agreed to continue in this capacity.

3.VQ Working Group Team

We have identified the Vision Quest Working Group Team as Lin Nibbelink, Sue Ann Morrow, LeAnn Moskowitz, and Lee Ann Russo of the Core State Leadership Team. Their information appears above. Others may be asked to join according to the nature of the topic of any particular call.

4.External Stakeholders/Leaders

Iowa's EFSLMP believes it is essential to have a full representation of critical stakeholders. The following individuals have been involved in Iowa's EFSLMP efforts since its inception and have agreed to continue: Shelly Chandler, Ashlea Lantz, Amy Desenberg-Wines and Jessica Kreho.

Shelly Chandler is the Executive Director of Iowa Association of Community Providers (IACP). She has been crucial in bringing providers to the table to engage in business model transformation.

Ashlea Lantz is a sibling of a young woman who, once served in segregated setting, now owns her own successful coffee shop. She is also the Employment Director of an innovative community employment agency, as well as past president of Iowa-APSE.

Amy Desenberg-Wines is the Project Director of ICIE.

Jessica Kreho is the Project Staff for the above-mentioned ICIE grant.

5. Confirmation of State's Ongoing Participation in Community of Practice Activities

The CoP Calls represent an effective and efficient method for providing valuable information to a large number of people. It was previously mentioned that Iowa recognized the value of this technique so much that we instituted our own Iowa CoP Calls. To ensure that the broadest audience is reached and informed of upcoming events, the following list-serves or groups will be notified:

- IACP
- Iowa-APSE
- IVRS—both internal and external lists
- InfoNet (DD Council Advocacy network)
- IME and MHDS contractors
- WIPA
- ASK Resource Center

While some individuals will receive announcements multiple times, using this extensive list will better ensure that all interested parties are kept apprised of current events in a timely manner.

It should be noted that the Iowa EFLSMP team has met, at a minimum, once a month to coordinate and collaborate on the established objectives of the current EFLSMP, demonstrating a strong investment in this change effort. This is a significant commitment and will continue with emphasis on the goals and objectives outlined in this proposal.

We appreciate the resources that EFLSMP has brought to our state, enabling us to accomplish what we have to date. We eagerly anticipate continuing, expanding and building upon this work in the coming year should we be chosen as a Core State for FY2015.



Iowa
**Vocational
Rehabilitation**
Services

Finding solutions. Generating success.

Terry E. Branstad, Governor
Kim Reynolds, Lt. Governor
Brad A. Buck, Director
Department of Education
David L. Mitchell, Administrator

October 27, 2014

Cheryl Mitchell
Economic Systems, Inc.
3141 Fairview Park Drive, Suite 700
Falls Church, VA 22042

Dear Ms. Mitchell:

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) is excited regarding the continued opportunity to expand Employment First efforts in Iowa through additional technical assistance hours from Subject Matter Experts, participation in the assigned Vision Quest topic and participation in the Community of Practice.

IVRS has actively participated in these efforts during the past three years and remains committed to the goals of increasing competitive, community-based integrated employment for individuals with the most significant disabilities.

We have momentum from our past efforts and feel additional technical assistance and guidance will provide additional opportunities for state systems to leverage time and resources for the value of all. Our specific goals in the attached proposal relate to enhancing community provider transformation efforts, as well as specific work within our Medicaid waiver system. We have targeted staff and leaders identified who are willing to make efforts at continued system change.

Thank you for this opportunity. We will continue to make every effort to make a positive impact on the delivery of employment services for individuals with disabilities.

Respectfully,

IOWA VOCATIONAL
REHABILITATION SERVICES

David L. Mitchell, MS, CRC
Administrator

DLM/jm



Ali Sayer
Economic Systems, Inc.
3141 Fairview Park Drive, Suite 700
Falls Church, VA 22042

Dear Ms. Sayer:

It is with great pleasure that I write this letter of support for the Iowa's EFLSMP proposal. The grant has been a critical component in helping our state move closer to fully integrated employment for all Iowans.

As shown in the billboard above, NIVC Services is committed to helping north Iowans with disabilities obtain and maintain employment. 'Helping people work' is our slogan, but making employment a reality for all north Iowans can't happen without training for our teams and support from our partners and peers. The EFLSMP grant has provided valuable technical assistance including customized employment training, subject matter experts, community of practice calls and webinars. The work has expanded opportunities for providers, state agencies and stakeholders to work together to identify strategies to improve employment outcomes.

Organizational transformation is a big part of changing the service delivery system in Iowa and several influential organizations are taking dramatic steps to move away from segregated service models. I am proud of the work and progress we have made and I am confident that our collective efforts and momentum will continue.

Thank you for the opportunity to support this important work. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

When Everybody Works, Everybody Wins!


Sherry O. Becker
Executive Director





October 29, 2014

Ali Sayer
Economic Systems, Inc.
3141 Fairview Park Drive, Suite 700
Falls Church, VA 22042

Dear Mr. Sayer and Selection Committee;

Please accept my strong letter of support for the state of Iowa to continue to receive support through the Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program (EFLSMP) grant. Candeo is a 100% community based provider located in Johnston, Iowa (suburb of Des Moines) that provides residential and employment services. Since Candeo's inception, we have been a provider that promotes E1st values; that community based employment is the first and preferred option for people with disabilities. In my eighteen years as a CEO of a community based provider, I have seen many employment providers choose to discontinue employment supports due to the lack of appropriate funding. Iowa's involvement in the EFLSMP has brought immense focus and support to realign Iowa's reimbursement rates to allow providers to meet their cost of providing supported employment services.

Candeo was one of the six Iowa providers who received technical assistance and training on customized employment through the EFLSMP grant. The onsite technical assistance and support received through EFLSMP impacted our employment team's ability to offer true person centered planning through the concept of Discovery, resulting in over sixty job seekers obtaining employment since January 2014. Additionally, this experience has spurred us to build upon our internal training practices and procedures to enhance customized employment practices.

We also have had the opportunity to mentor other providers in offering 100% community services and how to implement customized employment tools and practices. Continued support from the EFLSMP grant through the Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy is essential to continue the forward movement to achieving E1st expectations among our providers, state systems and most importantly, ensuring that we are increasing employment outcomes for people with disabilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Marcy M. Davis".

Marcy M. Davis, MBA
Chief Executive Officer



*University of Iowa
Hospitals and Clinics*

*Center for Disabilities and Development
100 Hawkins Drive
Iowa City, Iowa 52242-1011*

October 28, 2014

Ali Sayer
Economic Systems, Inc.
3141 Fairview Park Drive, Suite 700
Falls Church, Virginia 22042

Dear Mr. Sayer:

I am writing on behalf of the Center for Disabilities and Development (CDD), Iowa's University Center for Excellence on Disabilities to express the strongest possible support for the 2015 application being submitted by Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services for an Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program grant. This proposal is anchored in Iowa's sincere commitment to make *Olmstead* implementation a reality. We understand that *Olmstead* is not only about where one lives, but about what one does during the day. Full community participation is simply not possible without a job in the community.

The Center for Disabilities and Development applauds IVRS's intent to use the 2015 EFSLMP grant to continue the focus on funding and policy alignment as well as provider transformation activities. Development and nurturing cross-system, cross-agency strategic planning and shared leadership is necessary to remove systemic barriers. CDD has worked very closely over the past several years with the Iowa Department of Human Services on a range of employment initiatives. CDD staff have been embedded at the Division of Mental Health and Disability Services to help carry out the activities of DHS in the areas of funding and policy alignment for community-based employment. We are also assisting with individual and systemic outcomes reporting. As DHS's subcontractor for Iowa's Money Follows the Person grant, CDD has an employment specialist who helps transitioning individuals find jobs, and also works to address the systemic barriers that make finding community jobs challenging. This staff member, Sue Ann Morrow, PhD, has been very active with the EFSLMP Leadership team for the last three years, and will continue in this role.

The disability community in Iowa is more ready than ever to see integrated community employment truly become the expected outcome of employment-related services in our state. The collective impact of Iowa's community inclusion goals, this grant, and other related Iowa projects are the force which will push us across the finish line!

Much progress has been made over the last 18 months. We look forward to the continuation of these efforts and your favorable review of Iowa's proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Robert Bacon'.

Robert Bacon, M.A., Director
Iowa's University Center for Excellence on Disabilities



Unleashing Potential in People, By God's Power!

October 29, 2014

Ali Sayer
Economic Systems, Inc.
3141 Fairview Park Drive, Suite 700
Falls Church, VA 22042

Re: Iowa's EFSLMP Initiative

Dear Ms. Sayer:

It is with pleasure and pride that I support Iowa's Employment First efforts with their request for inclusion in the next round of the EFSLMP Initiative. Iowa's EFSLMP Initiative has been effective in promoting and expanding integrated employment for individuals with disabilities throughout the state, and within Hope Haven, Inc., the agency in which I serve.

Most notably, Iowa's Employment First efforts has brought a broad group of stakeholders to the table, which has resulted in a common focus on the need to promote and expand integrated employment for Iowans with disabilities. State Agencies, provider associations, consumers, families, educators, advocacy groups, educators, and provider agencies are together developing common understanding and commitment to Employment First principles and values. Understanding and mutual respect amongst stakeholders is growing, developing into the partnerships that will be necessary to further employment opportunities for consumers.

Specifically, Hope Haven, Inc. has benefitted from the EFSLMP Initiative on several levels:

- In 2012/13, we were one of seven Iowa employment service provider agencies involved in a pilot project through which Customized Employment was utilized to attempt to place five individuals from each agency with severe disabilities in individual integrated employment. Our core staff received two days of training on Customized Employment from Ellen Condon of Marc Gold & Associates. This one year effort resulted in three placements and staff who developed increased confidence and skill with C.E.
- In 2013, several of our administrative staff were involved in an effort to redesign the integrated employment service system in Iowa funded through Medicaid and Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services. We had opportunity to interact with/work in partnership with the broad stakeholder group and ODEP Subject Matter Experts to re-define service descriptions, develop provider capacity and training requirements, and re-craft reimbursement rates and payment methodologies. The state agencies are still working on the finalization of these aspects.

Main Office: 1800 19th Street • PO Box 70 • Rock Valley, IA 51247-0070
Phone: 712.476.2737 • Fax: 712.476.3194
www.hopehaven.org

- In 2013/14, our agency staff benefitted from a number of monthly national “Community of Practice” webinars hosted by ODEP on a variety of topics pertinent to integrated employment. Iowa’s Employment First collaborative organized and offered a series of webinars specific to Iowa issues and training of provider agency staff.
- In 2013/14, our agency and about a dozen other agencies received technical assistance from SME Nancy Gurney on “Organizational Transformation” to assist in moving from services with strong focus on facility based services to an increased focus on integrated services.
- In the one year period September 1, 2013 through September 1, 2014, Hope Haven placed 29 individuals in a total of 32 individual site, integrated jobs above minimum wage. The EFSLMP initiative has certainly contributed to this success.

The impact of the above EFSLMP-related activities has resulted in a new 5 year strategic plan that has set a new strategic direction for Hope Haven’s Employment Services: *Employment in the general workforce is the first consideration and preferred employment option for all.*

5 Year Outcomes include:

1. One hundred percent of individuals served in facility based employment services are working in group supported or individual integrated employment
2. 75% of individuals enrolled in My Choice Employment will be placed in integrated individual supported employment earning minimum wage or above.
3. Students with disabilities will transition from school to employment having similar job experiences as students without disabilities.

Hope Haven, Inc. endorses Iowa’s Employment First request for inclusion in the next round of the EFSLMP Initiative. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Scott Witte, LBSW

Director of Partnership & Service Development



Old Highway 218
Mount Pleasant, IA 52641

October 29, 2014

Mr. Ali Sayer
Economic Systems, Inc.
3141 Fairview Park Dr. Suite 700
Falls Church, IA 22042

Dear Mr. Sayer:

As President of IA-APSE, I am excited to write this letter in support of Iowa applying to continue to be a Core State in the Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program (EFSLMP). The work to date under this Project has been tremendously successful in assisting Iowa to align policies and reimbursement structures to increase integrated employment opportunities for our citizens with disabilities. While we are not there yet, the EFSLMP has been a major force driving the progress.

Pilot projects have been funded giving employment providers training and experience in Customized Employment, demonstrating that individuals once thought "unemployable" were quite capable of working when the appropriate strategy was used. Equally important was the information shared and technical assistance given to employment providers who were interested in transforming their business model. As one employment provider stated "there is a shift in momentum where the system will have to catch up". There is true excitement in the state. Diligent work on the rate restructuring, service definition, and staff qualifications are another example of the impact on EFSLMP on our state.

IA-ASPE has been represented on the state leadership team and continues to assist in the advocacy efforts to move the state forward. The training and technical assistance employment providers have been given and the information shared to the state agency staff through the Vision Quest calls has had a major impact of the services received and the outcomes experience by Iowans with disabilities.

As President of IA-APSE, I encourage you to positively consider the Iowa proposal and help us continue the work that has had such a profound impact in our state.

Sincerely,

Kelly Kratz
President



Iowa Department of Human Services

Terry E. Branstad
Governor

Kim Reynolds
Lt. Governor

Charles M. Palmer
Director

October 27, 2014

Ms. Cheryl Mitchell
Economic Systems, Inc.
3141 Fairview Park Drive, Suite 700
Falls Church, VA 22042

Re: Employment First State Leadership Mentoring Program (EFSLMP)

Dear Ms. Mitchell:


The vision of the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) is that people with disabilities live safe, healthy, productive, successful, self-determined lives in their homes and communities. This vision is consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Olmstead principles, and the goals of our recent redesign of our Mental Health and Disability Services delivery system.

Helping people to obtain and maintain integrated community employment at a living wage is a critical component of this vision. To that end, DHS is involved in several initiatives to increase community employment. The cross-systems leadership and collaboration, and the technical assistance from subject matter experts brought to us from EFSLMP is integral to these initiatives.

We understand that Iowa must coordinate our employment initiatives with our other state, local, and private partners to make the most impact for Iowans with disabilities. To this end, DHS supports the EFSLMP and Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation's application. DHS commits to supporting the goals of the application, and commits appropriate staff to involvement in the leadership team and the ongoing operation of the strategic plan goals and objectives.

DHS has been a collaborative partner in this program for the past two years, and we look forward to partnering over the next year. We look forward to the opportunity to learn from national subject matter experts, and to the Community of Practice opportunities afforded to us by the EFSLMP. We are excited to see the providers participating in transformation efforts to date, and look forward to encouraging many more to begin transformation. DHS is especially pleased to engage in the on-going efforts to align state systems and resources to further the goal of supporting everyone to work.

Sincerely,


Charles M. Palmer
Director

CMP/lrn

IOWA DD Council

Preparation, Participation, Power

30 October 2014

Mr. Ali Sayer
Economic Systems, Inc.
43141 Fairview Park Drive, Suite 700
Falls Church, VA 22042

Dear Mr. Sayer:

The Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council has a history of being actively involved in employment initiatives to strengthen employment outcomes for Iowans with disabilities. Most recently we have been a partner in the Employment First State Mentor Leadership Project and the fiscal agent for the Iowa Coalition for Integrated Employment. One of my greatest joys has been the collaboration between these two projects that allowed Iowa to effectively and efficiently use Federal funding opportunities to move the state system forward in a planned, thoughtful manner. The Subject Matter Experts and the pilot projects have made a lasting impact in Iowa in terms of the provider organizations access to the training and expertise to learn and practice new methods for employment preparation, placement and ongoing support of Iowans with disabilities.

I am excited with the direction these projects have taken and the results produced. I have been overwhelmed with the difference these efforts have made in providers willingness to discuss and participate in transformation activities. The Council has been supportive and this work led one Council member to pursue integrated community employment for his son who was recently hired in a community setting at above minimum wage. Needless to say the Council supports the application to for Federal supports to continue efforts at increasing community integrated employment, provider participation and transformation as well as the on-going efforts to align state systems and resources.

The Council is committed to support the goals and activities of the application. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,



Becky Maddy Harker, PhD
Executive Director



Shelly Chandler
Executive Director

October 31, 2014

TO: Mr. Ali Sayer
Economic Systems, Inc.
3141 Fairview Park Drive, Suite 700
Falls Church, Virginia 22042

RE: Letter of Support

Iowa Association of Community Providers (IACP) enthusiastically supports Iowa's bid to participate in the EFLSMP. IACP recognizes that Iowan's living with disabilities should be a vital part of the state's competitive workforce and further supports their right to work in an integrated community environment. IACP acknowledges in order for a strategic plan to be successful, there must be a strong commitment and belief system to this core value of integrated employment. Furthermore and equally important is dedicated leadership and collaboration between the state and key disability groups.

During the last grant cycle, Iowa took great strides to move forward its employment initiative. We gained the support of key stakeholders across state agencies, the legislature and Governor Branstad. Under the leadership of David Mitchell, from the Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services, several state agencies made commitments to employment for persons with disabilities. In the last legislative session, for the first time in recent history, the legislature fully funded IVRS, with the commitment to appropriate those funds for supported employment efforts.

Originally 5 community providers each committed to participating in a one-year project to work with 5 individuals identified through Money Follows the Person. I am so pleased to say the project expanded to 15 providers who, in the last year, placed 427 individuals in competitive employment!

IACP is pleased to take an ongoing leadership role in this effort to further expand opportunities for individuals with disabilities, and with the continued support of the involved state agencies, the legislature and Governor Branstad, we look forward to expanding the number of community providers involved in placing individuals into competitive employment and expanding the average weekly work hours of those employed.

In order for competitive employment to be a priority for Iowans living with disabilities, IACP supports the state's decision to select Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) to take the lead for the EFLSMP. IVRS is committed to working with its stakeholders to continue the advancement of the state's initiatives to move Iowa toward a disability service system, which fully supports the inclusion of individuals living with disabilities in the workplace. More importantly, IVRS is dedicated to creating a unified approach to system redesign that will resonate a consistent message and belief of the Employment First mission.

In addition to this letter of support, IACP is committed to working with Iowa throughout the EFLSMP project to establish a much desired system whereby integrated employment will result in the preferred outcome for individuals living with disabilities; regardless of the degree of disability. Iowa is revitalized with new leadership in the disability sectors within state government. The time is right to move this initiative to the forefront and make the changes that need to be made so all Iowans can benefit from competitive employment. The time has come and Iowa is prepared and dedicated to creating a system, which will have positive and preferred outcomes for integrated employment.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shelly Chandler".

Shelly Chandler
Executive Director
Iowa Association of Community Providers